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SPEECH

OF

Frederick Perry
MR. STANTON, OF TENNESSEE,

ON THE

OREGON QUESTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JANUARY 14, 1846.

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SPEECH.

On the resolution giving the twelve months' notice for the termination of the joint occupancy of the Oregon territory.

Mr. STANTON was entitled to the floor, and (after a moment's interruption) proceeded to address the committee.

He said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: In the intense anxiety of numerous members of the House to address the committee upon this momentous question, a proper estimate of my personal position and influence would require me to listen rather than to speak. A discussion of this character, maintained for so long a time, must have an important and immediate influence upon the business occupations and interests of the people of this vast country. But this influence, great as it is, and by no means to be overlooked or despised, is but dust in the balance, compared with those graver consequences which will result to this country and the world, if the fears of many gentlemen should be realized, and war should follow. Stupendous conflicts of nations and systems—conflicts which will shake, not only this country, but this globe to its centre—may possibly hang upon the issue of this debate.

I approach this subject of overwhelming magnitude, with a perfect knowledge of the slight influence my opinions can be expected to have, either upon this House or the country; yet, representing a district of some importance, both in its agricultural and commercial interests—a district comprising a portion of the people of a State whose sons have acquired some laurels in war, as well as some distinction in the more quiet walks of peaceful statesmanship—I feel it to be my duty to trouble the committee with my views upon the subject now under discussion. The people of Tennessee will not be backward to express their opinions—they will not be fearful to maintain them, in whatever manner and to whatever extent the occasion may require. I speak for myself. I think I can speak for those of my colleagues with whom I am associated as a member of the same party. I hope I can speak also for those with whom I am not thus associated. At any rate, I hope at least to hear from them before this discussion shall close, and that their views will exhibit a noble patriotism, which, upon a great question, involving the honor and interest of the whole nation, will forget all personal and party distinctions, and support the cause of their country with all their known talents, and with all the ardor and devotion of Tennesseans.

Mr. Chairman, there seems to be little diversity of opinion here, as to the question of title between Great Britain and the United States. I believe the recent correspondence between the respective plenipotentiaries of the two countries, will convince the impartial judgment of the world that we are rightfully entitled to the whole territory of Oregon, according to the principles adopted by European nations in reference to the appropriation of the American continent. I express no opinion as to the justice of those principles; I assert only, that even according to them, the whole of Oregon is ours. I shall follow the example of nearly all the gentlemen who have preceded me in this discussion, in omitting any argument on the question of title, except incidentally, in another part of my remarks.

The only question which has given rise to any serious debate here, is that which properly arises upon these resolutions—the propriety or impropriety of giving notice to Great Britain of the termination of the existing convention between the two powers, after a period of twelve months. This is the vital point of difference—the very hinge upon which our deliberations must eventually turn. And upon this great question, the widest and most irreconcilable differences prevail. It is asserted, and vehemently maintained, on one side of the House, that to give this notice will inevitably involve the two nations in war: on the other, it is maintained, with equal earnestness, that the measure proposed will not lead to war—that it is the only possible means of bringing the matter speedily to a favorable and peaceful termination. On the one hand gentlemen declare that they will take no step for the extension of our laws or the security of our citizens in Oregon, unless this notice be given; while, on the other hand, gentlemen say they will do all these things—they will extend our laws, erect forts, provide men and arms, establish Indian agencies and post-routes—in short, they will do everything else, but they will not give this notice. Sir, these are grave questions—questions upon which gentlemen may well differ without any just imputation upon their patriotism.

It is my intention, for the time allotted me by the rules of the House, to endeavor to discuss these questions, stripping them of every irrelevant consideration, and endeavoring, to the best of my ability, to arrive at a conclusion which shall be supported by reason and fortified by argument.

I maintain, sir, that the notice proposed to be giv

en to Great Britain cannot, of itself, be considered a war measure. The rival claimants themselves have incorporated into the convention, which we seek to terminate, a provision authorizing either party, at any moment, to do the very act which these resolutions are designed to effect. How can it be a war measure simply to perform the solemn stipulations of an existing treaty? So far from such a conclusion being at all justifiable, there is, on the contrary, not the least unfriendliness in the measure recommended by the President, and reported by the distinguished chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is a stipulated right, which England may exercise at any moment without any provocation to us, and which we may likewise claim without giving her any just cause of offence. Is not this proposition clear? And yet gentlemen have repeatedly and boldly asserted the contrary. I demand to know why this measure is called a war measure? I require, at least, some attempt at plausible reasoning to sustain the assertion. I have listened with the utmost attention to the arguments of some of the most distinguished gentlemen on this floor. I heard them assert again and again, that this measure is equivalent to war, and I hoped they would allege some reason for the assertion. I was wholly disappointed. This assumption was made the basis, of almost the whole of their arguments, and yet, I must confess, I was unable to see the strength of the foundation upon which their beautiful superstructures were reared. I maintain, sir, that the burden of proof and of argument rests upon them. Before we can assent to their proposition, they must make at least a *prima facie* case, and show why a measure provided for in the existing convention between the contending parties, can be considered a warlike procedure. I invite any gentleman to take up the argument where they have left it, and make good the assertion which they have evidently failed to sustain.

The distinguished and eloquent gentleman from Alabama [Mr. YANCEY] asserted that the convention was adopted as a substitute for war, leaving the inference to be drawn, that in the absence of the convention, war must necessarily have followed. I cannot admit either the statement or the inference. It does by no means follow, that because the two nations could not immediately agree upon terms of adjustment, war must necessarily ensue, without an agreement for joint rights within the disputed territory. I consider the conventions to have been unfortunate concessions on our part, tending to lengthen and complicate the negotiations, and to delay and render more difficult and dangerous the final adjustment of the question. It was an expedient, adopted in an evil hour, to put off a matter which must have forced a speedy and peaceable settlement of itself, had it not been the subject of these unfortunate agreements.

The same gentleman also declared that "England's rejection of our offers, proves that war would have followed but for the conventions." There is as little foundation for this assertion as for the other. If this proposition be true, its converse may likewise be affirmed; and it follows, that we would have gone to war upon our own rejection of England's offers. But, sir, the rejection of an offer, on one side or the other, does not preclude further offers, nor does it necessarily imply that the parties will then resort to the last dread alternative of war. It does not preclude the possibility that one party will, at the criti-

cal moment, abandon its unjust claims, and leave the other to the enjoyment of its rights. Surely, sir, there is nothing in these assertions which can establish the propriety of entering into, or continuing, an agreement, the only effect of which has been, and will continue to be, to involve the parties in relations more complex and difficult of settlement than before.

Nevertheless, sir, I must acknowledge that, if England persists in attempting to hold all the territory north of the Columbia river, or any portion of it south of the 49th parallel of latitude, war must necessarily come. But this will be not on account of notice; war will ensue under these circumstances, with or without notice. We can never submit to such a claim on the part of England. The war which she may wage in asserting that claim will be a war of aggression and invasion—a war which we must meet, as we would sternly meet the invader of this Capitol. I say it would be a war of invasion. And to show my exact meaning, I must be permitted to digress here for a while, to make some statements in reference to the title. I hold that England has no just title to any portion of Oregon. But her most plausible ground of pretension would be by that of contiguity, extending her possessions in North America by the 49th parallel to the Pacific. Now, if the Canadas actually extended on the line of 49° to the Rocky mountains, and the English government were actually present with its people and its power on the north of that line, and the two nations stood upon equal footing in regard to other sources of title, then England might justly claim to extend her territory on that line to the ocean. But none of these conditions actually exist. The Canadas do not extend on that line to the Rocky mountains—England is not present with her people and her government on this continent, and she does not stand upon an equal footing as to other grounds of title. The country contiguous to that part of Oregon, north of 49°, is the possession of the Hudson Bay Company, and cannot be extended by this principle of contiguity. The argument in this respect has lately been placed in a strong light. That company is a mere incorporation, and is subject to the limits prescribed by its charter, which is the law of its creation. That charter originally confined the company to Hudson's bay and its tributaries; and these limits cannot by any torture of construction be extended to those waters which fall over on the other side of the Rocky mountains into the Pacific ocean. An artificial person, a corporation, cannot overleap its prescribed powers; it cannot therefore extend its territories by the principle of contiguity. This is a well-settled principle of English common law; it is a principle which may well be adopted—indeed must be admitted, into the law of nations.

But I assume higher ground; I maintain, if this principle did not stand in the way—if the charter of the company as originally granted did not circumscribe its limits within that vast basin in the upper part of North America of which Hudson's bay is the centre, still it is not just, it never can be admitted, that a nation on another continent shall extend its possessions on this by contiguity. If the Canadas themselves bordered on this disputed country, and the circumstances of the two countries were otherwise equal, I should earnestly dispute the applicability of this principle. In the very nature of things it is wrong. Sir, the magnetic wires cannot

be extended across the Atlantic ocean—the all pervading influence of electricity is stopped there, and the mysterious voice is thrown in the noise of the surge that beats our shore. Is the invisible power of England more penetrating and pervading than the universal agent I have named? Or rather do the silent emanations of her power circulate around the whole globe, (like those mighty currents which give polarity to the earth and direct the needle,) causing every interest, in every land, to turn trembling upon its centre, and point to London as its pole? Are there no barriers? Do its intangible links extend through all oceans, over all lands, enabling her to grasp new countries, and divide them with contiguous powers, because she has a foothold by their side? The law which makes the ocean a barrier to instantaneous communication between nations—the law of nature, which has separated continents by interposing vast abysses, forbids that nations on one continent shall have rights on another by implication, extension, contiguity, or by any other intangible, intangible, metaphysical principle whatever. England has attempted to carry out on this continent, by diplomacy, the principles which she has established by the sword in her East India aggression. It remains to be seen whether, when diplomacy fails, she will attempt to use the same means here. The United States owe it to themselves—they owe it to this continent, and the world—to resist the application of those principles. The powers of the Old World, upon the discovery of this continent, adopted principles for its division among themselves; they may have been bound to each other for the maintenance of those principles. Nay, those principles may have been just and wise in their application to such nations, distant as they were from the wild and uncultivated countries which they sought to appropriate. Yet it does not follow that we are to be bound by these conventional arrangements. Our relations to this continent are widely different. We have risen here, a mighty nation, fast approaching, and destined soon to surpass, the greatness of any European power. We have undisputed rightful possession of a large portion of this continent, and neither reason nor authority will admit that the government of any unappropriated portion of it should be transferred to a distant nation.

I hope I shall be understood. I do not mean to adopt that ground of title which has been assumed here by some gentlemen, under the imposing name of *manifest destiny*. It was the manifest destiny of England to spread her empire over a large portion of this continent, and of Asia. But that destiny, made manifest by complete fulfilment and perfect realization, neither commends itself to our minds as right, nor does it justify the arbitrary and oppressive measures by which it has been achieved. I believe it is our destiny to possess the whole of Oregon; but this destiny does not make it right; it is our destiny, because it is right. It is not necessary to name the principle I have attempted to state, nor does it require any course of reasoning to establish it. It is one of those propositions of which the bare statement carries conviction to the mind. It is an axiom in political science, as applied to this continent, and must receive universal assent, because it is based upon the law of nature. It is the same principle, in effect, which Mr. Monroe stated when he denied the right of European nations to make further colonies on this continent, and which the President, in his late message, has again so appro-

priately and opportunely asserted in the face of the world.

If there be any force in my reasoning, Mr. Chairman, it follows as a clear inference that a war prosecuted by Great Britain for any part of Oregon would be a war of aggression. And it would be a monstrous usurpation, a gross and blatant shame to humanity, surpassing all the bounds of ordinary crime, if England should determine to wage war upon us for any part of the territory *below the 49th parallel*. And, sir, I repeat, if such be the disposition of the British government, if such be her foregone determination, the war must and will come, with or without notice. England would be responsible to the world—to Heaven—for the disastrous consequences of such a war. It would be but another crime of fearful magnitude added to that already innumerable mass of fraud and havoc by which England has heretofore extended her power, and by which she now maintains it. Did some gentleman say her crimes were represented by a vast pyramid of human skulls? I say, sir, rather by a huge pyramid of human hearts, living, yet beating and bleeding in agony, as they are torn from the reeking bosoms of the toiling, fighting millions!

It is said, if this war comes, it will be no ordinary war. It will be a war in which the despoticisms of the Old World will struggle in deadly conflict with the freedom of the New. And it has been asserted here that in this contest liberty will bite the ground, and go down forever. Sir, those who take this view leave out of the calculation one most important element. They seem to forget that we shall have the sympathies of the masses in all nations—that the people who bear the burdens of oppression, and who so frequently seek to escape to this country from the merciless exactions of governments that sustain themselves by immense standing armies, will not willingly battle in the cause of tyranny against that of freedom. They forget that Ireland is tumultuous; that Canada only waits for a fair opportunity to throw off the British yoke; that Louis Philippe cannot be expected to live much longer; and that the British people themselves are groaning restlessly under laws which deprive them of bread, and at the same time exact from them interest upon a debt of four thousand millions of dollars, as well as revenues to support a vast and splendid government. Sir, when these things are duly weighed, the termination of such a contest may not be quite so unfavorable to us as some gentlemen imagine. If war be fearful to us, it is equally formidable to England. She is not in a situation to court war. We never have, we never shall court it.

Gentlemen speak of the preparation of England, and our want of it. They point to the steam fleet of that haughty nation, and tell us it will blow our navy out of the water, and demolish our cities. I shall make but one remark on this subject. It is fortunate for us, that we have not frittered away our strength and our means in maintaining large standing armies, and building mighty fleets. For this is an age in which great inventions have been made. Man has been calling to his aid, and subduing to his purposes, the tremendous powers of elemental nature. And if I am not greatly mistaken, there are now spirits at work in this Capitol whose inventions, sanctioned by scientific minds and approved by practical men, will supersede any former combination of forces, and render the boasted British navy comparatively clumsy and powerless.

this government may not have the wisdom to adopt them. That remains to be seen. At all events, sir, we never can, perhaps we never ought, to be better prepared for war than we are at present, except when the occasion itself shall imperiously demand the preparation. It is only at a crisis like this, when we shall be suddenly brought into danger of conflict with other powers, that our sluggish energies will be awakened. Let the hour of action come, and this great nation will create fleets and collect armies, with a celerity which will astonish the world. Sir, I hope the occasion will not come; I believe it will not; I know it cannot, unless England shall wantonly invade our rights.

But gentleman, in this debate, have endeavored to look into the future, and calculate the consequences of war to our free institutions. Doubtless war must tend to strengthen the central power, and it cannot by any means be the element in which our institutions will flourish best. I deplore the havoc, the exhaustion, the taxes, the debt, that must be the result of such a struggle. Yet our country was nurtured in war. Our institutions took their very start from the tumult of the battlefield, and they have since been tried by another stern ordeal, in a conflict with the same powerful people. If it should be our fate again to be involved in the same calamity, does any gentleman believe the result will be less glorious than in the two former wars? If such fears steal into our hearts, the battle is already lost. If we must go into the conflict, let us at least go with our usual confidence in the stars which have ever led us to victory.

I have argued that the proposed notice is not in itself a cause of war, and I think I have fully sustained the position. But gentlemen may say, although notice itself may not be a sufficient provocation, the measures contemplated afterwards will be the cause of hostilities. What measures? Will it be the extension of our laws over our citizens in Oregon? England has long since done the same thing. Will it be the erection of forts within the territory? England already has there her fortified stations. What measures have been proposed which can possibly be objected to? Is it the occupation of Oregon by emigration from the United States? If this be the fancied cause of war, I do not see why we, who desire to give the notice, can be more responsible for it than they who oppose it; for not one of the opponents of this measure has failed to say that our population would finally settle the right to the whole of Oregon. Then, if I understand them correctly, they are for occupying the whole of Oregon as well as we. Some of them, indeed, have expressed a perfect willingness to do everything that has been proposed, except the giving of this notice. I cannot but think there is some little inconsistency in these two positions. If those measures will excite England to war *with notice*, will they not do so *without notice*? Might not England, perhaps, complain of a violation on our part of existing treaty stipulations? And would not this be a pretext for war, which would not exist after the treaty shall have been terminated by the stipulated notice? I ask, sir, what we have proposed to do, that all other gentlemen in this House are not willing to do, leaving out of view the notice? There is nothing, sir; and as the notice, of itself, is evidently not war, those gentlemen are as ready to plunge the country into a war as we, for they would do everything of a warlike nature which we propose to do.

Mr. Chairman, I do not believe this notice will produce war. I believe, on the contrary, it will tend to hasten the peaceable adjustment of the question. Am I required to say why I believe this? I might well answer, that we have been negotiating under the existing convention for more than a quarter of a century, and yet we have made no progress whatever in the business. I might well argue that our experience has proved that the conventions, so far from assisting the negotiations, have retarded them. Sir, during this long period, the life of a generation, diplomacy has exhausted itself. It is time to cease this diplomatic trifling. It is time to assert our rights, and firmly to maintain them. In order to do this, we must change the face of things. We must alter the circumstances by which we have heretofore been fettered. We must brush away the cobwebs which have been suffered to be woven over the subject, obscuring the vision both of England and ourselves. I ask if there be not force in this position? We have tried negotiation under these conventions, for a period long enough, to have settled a dozen such questions, if there had been any real disposition on both sides to settle it. Shall we not now try what success we shall have in the absence of these conventions? This course commends itself to our judgment. We have tried the one with complete failure—now let us try the other. May we not at least hope for better success in the altered circumstances? What will be the force and power of the new circumstances which we propose to bring about? When this notice shall have been given, the United States and England will stand untrammelled—relieved from all embarrassing agreements whatever—naked before the world—each standing upon its own proper rights. They will stand face to face, looking each other in the eye, and perfectly conscious of the dread alternative which will follow a failure to adjust the dispute by a treaty. They will deeply feel the absolute and pressing necessity of amicable action. Shall we not bring it to this crisis? Does any one fear it? I acknowledge it is dangerous; but not more dangerous than a tardy and temporizing policy. Here are Sylla and Charybdis. We must pass. Shall we not grasp the helm sternly and firmly, trusting to our prudence and skill to guide us through the dangerous abyss?—or shall we beat about listlessly, backwards and forwards, uncertain what shall be our course, yet perfectly conscious that sooner or later we must endure the peril?

Sir, when things shall be brought to this point, must war necessarily follow? In the 19th century, with all its boasted civilization and morality, must two great nations fear to come up boldly to the adjustment of a great question, lest a deadly conflict may ensue? Can England go to war in the face of the late correspondence between her minister and ours? I assert she cannot, she will not. To maintain that she will, argues a want of confidence in the strength of our title, which nearly every gentleman here has admitted to be clear and unquestionable. When England shall see that this long existing negotiation must be settled, promptly and fairly, she will be willing to make a settlement of it, which we may honorably accept. The honorable gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. Cobb,] who comes to the same conclusion that I do, said the other day, that England would never accept the proposition made by Mr. Polk. Doubtless she will not, so long as this convention shall remain. Perhaps it is not her interest to do so. Neither will she, as Mr. Polk is

his message declares, make any offer which we could possibly accept. But, sir, I have but little judgment, if, when the convention shall be terminated, and this great question shall press upon her with the weight of a dreadful alternative, she do not then agree to settle it upon terms which ought to be satisfactory to us. I do not mean that she will be frightened or bullied into terms; but I mean, that she will be swayed by the same motives which ought to sway us—a desire to avoid war, and to adjust the difficulty upon a basis that shall be fair and honest. A distinguished gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. Huxter] has said, he will not agree to give this notice, because, if it will not bring war, it will force the settlement of the question upon the basis of the 49th parallel, and he is so well satisfied of the strength of our title to the whole, that he would deplore such a settlement of the dispute. Suppose, sir, the next steamer from England should bring the news in authentic form, that the British government had instructed Mr. Pakenham to accept the late offer of our government, which he did not accept when made: what would we then do? Would that gentleman—would any other gentleman on this floor—take the responsibility of refusing such an opportunity to dispose of this dangerous business? Could any administration justify itself before the country, by such action, in such an emergency? I know not what may be the feelings of the President on this subject; but, for my own part, I should hesitate long, I should reflect deeply, before I would sacrifice the peace and prosperity of two great nations, upon such a point. But England must act promptly and speedily. Delay will fully justify us in asserting our right to the whole territory. And if we fight—we shall certainly fight for the whole—ay, sir, for more. We can make no more offers. Our President has offered as much as any President ought ever to have offered—more than one should ever offer again.

But, sir, how do these gentlemen propose to get the whole of Oregon, by maintaining the present posture of affairs? Is the existing convention most favorable to us or to England, so far as the possession of the country is concerned? In my judgment, England is strengthening herself every day. This she is doing in a double aspect. She is strengthening her pretended claim of title. For, however well we may be satisfied that neither our offers of half the country to England by way of compromise, nor these conventions, which expressly reserve the rights of each, affect unfavorably our title; yet I aver there is not a gentleman on this floor who, upon the naked question of title, would not wish that these offers had never been made—that the two conventions had never been adopted. We may say that the treaty does not recognize "joint occupation," yet we cannot rid ourselves of the feeling that some sort of joint rights are acknowledged. I believe, sir, the strongest show of right which England can present is that which arises from this very thing. She argues, because we have offered her much, she must be entitled to more. And she can say, with great plausibility, she is at least entitled to as much as we have offered her.

Now, sir, the longer this convention exists, and the more frequent offers we make her, the stronger will grow her pretended claim. She will presently set up a prescriptive right under the operation of the convention. I desire to prevent this as far as possible. Let us give the notice in order to prevent things from growing worse with us. Let things at

least remain as they will be now upon the termination of this convention, since it will not better them to continue it.

But it is not only in this manner that England is strengthening herself in the Oregon territory. She is increasing her population; she is erecting fortifications; she is arming and manning them. It is well known there are no American settlements north of the Columbia river, and American citizens will not be permitted to settle there, if they should, under present circumstances, even desire to do so. But they will not do so, for the simple reason that they do not feel secure. They are not satisfied of the policy of this government, in reference to that part of the territory. Sir, they will not settle there until this government shall take some step which will assure them of its aid and protection against British power.

I have already said we could never consent to surrender any portion of the territory below the 49th parallel, and I have attempted to give my reasons for believing that England has no plausible pretext whatever for any claim of title south of that line. Now, it is well known, and I believe fully admitted, that unless we obtain the country at least to that line, we lose the most valuable part of it—we get no valuable harbors—and so far as the commercial importance of the region is concerned, we might as well give up the whole territory. This being the state of things, and England, through the Hudson Bay Company, having possession of that part of the territory, what is to be the course of our emigration, if things remain as they are? I believe emigration will in a great measure cease. It has been only the hope that our government would take this great step, and assert our title, at least to some valuable portion, if not to all the territory, which has caused the stream of emigration to set in that direction. Can our people become strong there, if they are shut out from the harbors, and in that way deprived of any participation in the advantages of commerce? What inducement is there for emigrants from the United States to seek that country, under such disadvantages? The gentleman from Virginia spoke of the advancing population of our country, proceeding westward, on a line of a thousand leagues, at the rate of half a degree of longitude every year. Let it be remembered, however, that this tide cannot advance over the Rocky mountains. The Pacific coast must first be settled, long before the intervening space can possibly be filled up. The tide that will roll onward from that quarter, will meet the advancing tide from this. In my judgment, it is a chimera to suppose that the settlement of the country will be effected in any other way. Then, sir, the difficulty remains—how shall our people get a firm foothold in that territory? You must clear the way for them; you must remove the British forts from the north side of the Columbia river; or, as has been forcibly observed, you must, at least, untie the hands of those who go there.

But, sir, suppose the convention continued, and suppose, against all the obstacles I have named, our people should continue to flow into that country. What is to be the result? If England will not give us the country without the existing convention, will she give it to us with it? Will she remove her forts? Will her people quietly abandon their stations to ours? Will England, will the Hudson Bay Company, calmly look on, and see our people silently or forcibly supplanting them, and that, too, when



a convention exists between the two countries, guaranteeing some sort of equal rights to the citizens of both? By what sort of a process are our people to root out the British? Do not gentlemen know what the Hudson Bay Company is doing? Do not gentlemen know the military organization and formidable power of that monstrous corporation, which seeks to run the career of its great prototype, the East India Company, that operates just over on the other side of the Pacific?

I find, sir, in the fourth volume of the narrative of the exploring expedition, a copy of the obligation which the Hudson Bay Company requires of all its servants. They give their bonds "to devote their whole time and labor to the service of the company;" "to perform all work or service, by day or by night;" "to obey all orders;" "with courage and fidelity to defend the property of said company—their territories and factories;" "to defend the rights and privileges of said company;" "and, if required, to enrol as soldiers, and attend all drills and exercises necessary to acquire a knowledge of the duties required," &c. Here is a perfect military organization, and it exhibits very plainly what are the designs of that monstrous company. It warns us that our advancing tide of population will not be permitted to trespass upon what it considers its territories.

Is not this the true state of things in that distant region? If it be not, why are our people calling upon us for aid and protection? Why do our people all settle south of the Columbia? and why are they dependent upon the Hudson Bay Company for all their commerce? When will these things be altered, if this convention shall continue? When will our people begin to settle north of the Columbia river?

But, sir, England knows very well the situation of things in Oregon. She is, perhaps, better informed than we. If she is ready now to fight for this country—if she has made her determination not to give it up without a great contest—and if we, as gentlemen suppose, are gaining by the existing arrangement—will she not terminate it herself? But when did England ever make the first movement towards that measure? Now this is a plain proposition: if England will go to war rather than yield us our rights, and if we shall certainly advance towards the acquisition of the territory, by the existing convention, then she will herself give us the notice, which we hesitate to give her. Farsighted as she is, she will bring on the contest now, before we shall have grown strong enough in that quarter to accomplish our stealthy design. If England does not now pursue this course, if she holds on to the convention, I argue that she, at least, does not believe time will benefit us more than her. And I, sir, am disposed to learn wisdom from her example—believing that where our interests are opposite, our policy ought to be also. If she would

hold on to the date it.

It is, perhaps of the amendment Alabama [Mr.] sequence. If

gentlemen allege, to the shoulders of this House, I have no disposition thus to evade a duty which belongs to me. I accept my share of the responsibility, knowing that whatever may be the consequence—whether peace or war ensue—the cause of our country is just in the sight of God and man. But the amendment of little importance, since the President has already, in his message, told us he believes now is the appropriate time to give the notice. Should the resolution, with the amendment, be adopted to-day, he would give the notice to-morrow. It might weaken the influence of the measure upon the action of Britain. She might well suppose that the legislature of the nation had exhibited less firmness than the Executive, and that it would tremble, in a certain contingency, to sustain him by those ulterior measures which the crisis might render indispensable. I hope we shall present an unbroken front—that we shall fully sustain the President, not only in the noble stand he has already taken, but in all other measures which the honor and security of our common country may at any time require.

Mr. Chairman, I have said all I have to say on this subject. I cannot lay claim to any practical experience in statesmanship. The reasoning I have attempted, has satisfied me that the proposed notice cannot, of itself, affect the question of peace or war, and that every consideration of policy and interest, requires us to give it without delay. I respect the opinions of those differ from me, and I sincerely regret that such differences exist. I shall follow my own convictions with a due sense of the solemn responsibilities under which I act, leaving others the same liberty which I claim, without suffering myself, for a moment to doubt their integrity, and patriotism.

I solemnly believe that gentlemen who think war will come are mistaken. I earnestly pray that peace may continue to waive her golden wings, and scatter her rich blessings over our happy country, and that those bright visions, which gentlemen have pictured as destined to gladden our hearts, under the auspicious eye of this hovering angel, may never be blasted by the blood-stained demon of war. I woo the favor, and the continued presence of this guardian spirit, with my deepest devotion. I would sacrifice much; I would suffer much to detain her. But if she must depart—if she is destined to take her sad "flight from earth to Heaven again"—then welcome the black tempest of war! Welcome its terrors, its privations, its wounds, and deaths! We will sternly bare our bosoms to its deadliest shock, and trust in God for the result.

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